114 *Shilluk People* by Professor Diedrich Westermann,
121 who conducted linguistic research among the Shilluk in 1910, and Father Wilhelm Hofmayr's *Die Schilluk*, largely based on the observations of Father Banholzer and other of his fellow Catholic missionaries, which date from the beginning of the century. Father Hofmayr himself worked among the Shilluk from 1906 to 1916. There has, indeed, long been a considerable body of knowledge about the Shilluk and I would not have considered it profitable to discuss the Shilluk kingship afresh were it not that new light has recently been shed on their social structure, and more particularly on the place of the kingship in it, by officers of the Sudan Political Service. It is significant that two of them studied anthropology before joining the Sudan Service, Mr P. P. Howell at Cambridge, from where he had carried out some research among the Shilluk before joining the Service, and Mr W. P. G. Thomson at Oxford. It is from this literature, and especially from the more recent accounts, that I have drawn the material for my lecture, for though the Shilluk live in a part of the world with which I am very familiar, my contact with them has been slight.

101 The Shilluk are the most northern of the Nilotic
• 175 peoples and have been for centuries in contact

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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FOREWORD

IT was in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when Mohammed Ali conquered the Sudan for Egypt, that western civilization came into touch with the Nile Negroes, and it was not until fifty years later, during the period of the great explorers—Speke, Grant, Marno, Schweinfurth, Emin Junker, and others—that there was any reliable knowledge of the character of the various tribes and of the areas they occupied. Travelling and investigating before the birth of modern anthropological methods, the information gathered by these early explorers is of relatively slight value to the anthropologist. Further progress was stopped by the rise of the Mahdi, and it was not until 1900, after the reconquest of the Sudan, that investigation became possible. Acting under the advice of that many-sided scholar the late D. G. Hogarth, Sir James Currie (then Director of Education) induced the Sudan Government to provide the funds for a small ethnographic survey which we were asked to undertake. It was Sir James who made the preliminary arrangements for our visit, and to him we owe a great deal for his kindly and carefully considered introduction to what was then a difficult and little-known country, as well as for the completely free hand he gave us as to the manner of our work.

An ethnographic survey should not merely give an account of the main physical and cultural characters of the people of a given area, but should provide the data for the study of their relationship to each other as well as to tribes outside the area surveyed. Therefore, although it has not been possible to obtain the same amount of information among all the peoples studied, we have tried to adhere to a general plan. Whenever possible, subjects have been measured and photographed, not only to give an idea of the physical characters of each tribe but because we believe these characters to be most important in settling the affinities of tribal and larger groups. The political and social organization has been recorded (at least in outline) with as much as possible of the religious beliefs, for without a knowledge of these no aspect of tribal life can be understood. Whilst no people has been investigated so thoroughly as to yield a complete cultural picture, we have, we believe, laid the foundation of a scientific study of the peoples of the Sudan. In doing this we have constantly

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

174 slave?' Connecting with this word the same notion of pride, as one in England would say: 'Do you not know I am a peer of the kingdom?' All titles and 101 offices are not respected, if they are not in the hands of a man who is a slave. Slavery is in Sennar the only true nobility". This subversion of social ranks becomes intelligible, if we assume a state of facts as suggested above, viz. that the Shilluks, and perhaps also, in a limited number, the Nubians, who lived in the country as a kind of military caste and still were designated as slaves, had in fact become the ruling race. They may even at times have possessed the throne, as the name of one of the Funj kings indicates: Gaadi Abu Shilluk. — Thus we understand also the report of the executioner from whom Bruce got his information: he was a descendant of the Shilluk immigrants, and considering the position the latter held at that time, he was not wrong in saying the Funj were originally Shilluks. The same is to be said of the Nubian priests, who claimed for their home the region of the Eliri monntains. 9. The present language of the Funj, of which Marno gives some 150 words, is not identical with the Shilluk language, but it shows unmistakable signs of a connection with the latter, a number of words being common to both, notably

[197] [192]

Funj.	Shilluk.
bunj Arab	*bwoń* stranger, Arab
ibibia ant	*bl* white ant
kamas to eat	*chāmǫ* to eat
nani hippo	*nani* croc[illegible]
lei giraffe	*lqi* game
jok God	*jwǫk* God
kglu star	*kyglǫ* star
mine dumb	*mịn* dumb
kaj au to-day	*kach an* this time
ko-song spear	*tọn* spear
luss stick	*loǫ, loǫ* stick, club.

Thus out of a number of about 150 Funj words given by Marno 11 are Shilluk words; and, what is remarkable, these eleven words the Funj has *not* in common with its neighbouring languages Tabi and Bertat, they can therefore not be borrowed from these languages.

175 In 1786 the kingdom of the Funj totally disappeared. King Adlan was deposed by the Hameg (Hamej), a tribe living south of Roseires. Anarchy prevailed throughout the country, and the kings succeeded each other in such rapid succession that in the year 1788 four kings successively reigned. During the succeeding 33 years of anarchy the Hameg continued supreme, and under Sheikh Nasser they devastated the northern and eastern part of the Sudan with

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

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fire and sword.

In 1820 the Turkish-Egyptian troops under Ismail Pasha occupied the country and defeated the Funj in the battle of Abu Shoka.

Apart from these expansions towards the Blue Nile the Shilluks of the White Nile have frequently waged wars against the Dinkas and Nuers, of which their traditions tell. More severely they suffered from never-ending raids by Arabs and Turks, undertaken for the purpose of stealing cattle and slaves.

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CONQUEST OF THE SHILLUK COUNTRY

a) By the Turks. As early as 1820—1830 the Sudan was conquered by the Turko-Egyptian government, and was considered as part of the Turkish empire; but this hardly affected the political situation of the Shilluk kingdom, the Turkish rule not being strong enough to make its influence felt, except in levying at intervals heavy taxes in cattle and corn, and in making slave raids.

b) By the Baggara Selim. In 1861 the Baggara Selim under Faki Mohammed Kher invaded the Shilluk country and plundered it thoroughly. Mohammed Kher married the daughter of the Shilluk king and practically made himself the ruler of the country. —[1] In the same year Sir Samuel Baker started for his expedition into the Sudan. His description of the Sudan at this period gives a melancholy picture of the results of Egyptian rule. He describes the provinces as utterly ruined and only governed by military force, the revenue unequal to the expenditure, and the country paralysed by excessive taxation; the existing conditions rendered these countries so worthless to the State that their annexation could only be accounted for by the fruits of the slave trade. — On this expedition Baker founded the military post of Taufikia on the right bank of the White Nile, near the mouth of the Sobat; this place has since then consistently been continued as a station for troops.

SIR SAMUEL BAKER'S EXPEDITION

On Ismail Pasha coming to the throne in 1863 orders for the suppression of the slave trade were issued and on Baker's return journey in 1865, he found an Egyptian camp of 1000 men established at Kodok in the Shilluk country for the purpose. — Khartum was at that time the headquarters of the slave traders, who carried out their traffic under the cloak of legitimate commerce. The traders organised armies of brigands, and formed chains of stations, of about 300 men each, throughout their districts, which they had leased from Government. Raids were made on native tribes, who were obliged to submit, fly the country, or ally themselves to the slave hunters, to be used against other tribes.

CONQUEST BY THE EGYPTIANS 1871

In 1871 the Shilluk country was finally conquered by the Egyptians and became a province of the Turkish empire.

In 1874 Charles Gordon was appointed Governor of the Equatorial Provinces, and at the close of the same year he could report to the Egyptian Government that the slave trade on the White Nile had received a deadly blow.

[1] The following data have with few exceptions been taken from The A. E. S.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

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REBELLION OF THE SHILLUKS 1875

During Gordon's absence in 1875, the Shilluk tribes in the neighbourhood of Kodok rose in rebellion against the oppression of the Government, and, had it not been for the presence of Gessi, an Italian adventurer who had joined Gordon's staff, Kodok would probably have been lost.

DISTURBANCES OF THE MAHDI, BEGINNING IN 1881

A great cause of disturbance in the Sudan was the appearance of the Mahdi Mohammed Ahmed, a native of Dongola; he began his career in 1881. The Shilluks and their country were in many ways affected by these troubles; not only did they with their own troops fight against the Mahdi, but their young men also formed a considerable and valuable part of the Anglo-Egyptian army.

The Mahdists extended their invasions far into the Sudan and took possession also of the Shilluk country. But in 1890 the Shilluks rebelled against their oppressors: an Emir of the Mahdi Zeki, Tumal, was sent thither to quell the rebellion, with a force chiefly consisting of the Gallabat men who had fought bravely against the Abyssinians in 1889. During the whole of 1891 the war against the Shilluks continued, the Mahdists ("Dervishes") on more than one occasion being heavily defeated, and the communications between Omdurman, the residence of the Khalifa, and Bahr el Jebel being completely interrupted. Two steamers had stuck in the sudd in the winter of 1888, and had been taken by the Shilluks; desperate efforts were now made by the Dervishes to effect their recapture. In August, 1891, the Nuers were used as allies by the Dervishes, and succeeded in killing the king of the Shilluks. Soon afterwards, however, the Nuers turned against their allies and expelled them from the country south of Kodok, whilst the Shilluks inflicted a severe defeat on their enemy near Kodok, in December, 1891, and again in January, 1893. The war was waged with indecisive results till 1894, when the Dervishes finally crushed the Shilluks and murdered their king's wife. After that the Dervishes merely kept a small tax-collecting outpost at Kodok.

On the 10th September, 1898, Kitchener left Omdurman for the south with five gunboats and troops, and having destroyed a Dervish force of 700 at Renk, arrived at Kodok on the 19th, where he found the French expedition under Marchand. He left a garrison at Fort Sobat. This place has been relinquished since as a military post.

On 19th January, 1899, an agreement was signed between Great Britain and Egypt, defining the status of the Sudan, and laying down broad principles for its government.

FINAL DEFEAT OF THE KHALIFA 1899

In the same year, on the 24th November, the power of the Khalifa Abdallah, who was the successor of Mohammed Ahmed, was utterly defeated by the Anglo-Egyptian army at Um Dubreika; the Khalifa himself was killed. This victory finally stamped out the Dervish dominion in the Sudan.

3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

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EXPEDITION OF THE ABYSSINIANS 1898

In summer 1898 an Abyssinian force came down the Sobat. It arrived at Sobat mouth at the end of June, but, owing to the death of the leader, the expedition returned almost immediately, without having a hostile encounter with the Shilluks.

LATEST EVENTS

In April, 1903, the Shilluk king Kur Wat Nyedok *(Ńeḍọk)* was deposed for malpractices; his successor, Fadyet Wat Kwat Ker *(Kẹ̄r)*, is now limited in power, and is subservient in most things to the Governor of the Upper Nile Province, a Britisch officer resident in the town of Kodok (Fashoda). Gradually the whole Shilluk population was now brought under the more direct control of the Anglo Egyptian Government. The election of their king is now subject to the approval of the Governor General.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN THE EGYPTIAN SUDAN.

BY CHARLES R. WATSON, PHILADELPHIA.

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The "American Mission" of the United Presbyterian Church of North America and the Church Missionary Society of Great Britain are the two missionary agencies representing Protestant Christendom in the Egyptian Sudan. Both Missions began their work after the opening up of the Sudan through Kitchener's victory over the Mahdi forces at Omdurman: the Church Missionary Society in 1899 and the American Mission in 1900. In Northern Sudan they labor alongside of each other in a spirit of comity and cooperation, each developing such missionary work as the other may not have taken up at each station occupied by both societies.

The stations occupied by the American Mission in Northern Sudan and the forces and work maintained at these stations in 1911 were as follows:

Khartum: An ordained American missionary; a native ordained native pastor; an organized native congregation with 142 members; a boys' school with an enrolment of 210; regular congregational services; a clinic; a boys' orphanage or home.

Khartum North: Two unmarried American women missionaries and an American doctor; a girls' boarding school with an enrolment of 133 in both day and boarding departments; a boys' day school with an enrolment of 143; a clinic; regular preaching services.

Omdurman: An ordained American missionary; a boys' school with an enrolment of 80; regular preaching services.

Wad Medani: A colporteur evangelist with regular preaching services; a mixed school with an enrolment of 8 boys and 12 girls.

8:Howell E-4,5 (1937, 1948) 1953 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SHILLUK OF THE UPPER NILE

CUSTOMARY LAW: MARRIAGE AND THE VIOLATION OF RIGHTS IN WOMEN

P. P. HOWELL

IN a previous article on the Shilluk[1] I discussed the laws of homicide and the legal and ritual functions of the *reth* or King. An interpretation of Shilluk law and authority is not easy because, apart from early contacts with the peoples of the northern Sudan, they have been subjected to external influences and some kind of Government since the early years of the last century. These contacts began with cursory and not altogether happy encounters with the Turco-Egyptian Government which were followed by the establishment of a provincial headquarters at Kodok in 1867 under the authority of a *mudir*; later came the turbulent and dismal years of the *Mahdia* and finally the occupation by the present Government in 1898. It would be idle to suppose that the political system of the Shilluk has remained unaffected by these influences. The Shilluk are by reputation an exceptionally conservative people and certainly the effects of their relations with outsiders are, to the casual observer, hard to detect. Profound changes have taken place none the less, especially in the sphere of customary law, and these changes are undoubtedly gathering momentum.

By 'law' I mean simply those customary rules governing human relationships from which there has developed a body of rules classed as 'customary law' (sometimes 'native law and custom') administered under the Chiefs' Court Ordinance of 1931, and more or less consistently applied in the tribunals established by the Government.

These courts have now largely taken the place of the ultimate sanction for conformity with accepted rules of conduct, for the fulfilment of recognized duties and the composition of all disputes, which was formerly the resort to force by the injured party and his supporters. It is my opinion that the ordered indigenous administrative system of the Shilluk, so enthusiastically described by some writers, and the organized repressive measures alleged to have been undertaken by the *reth*, are not only exaggerated, but also, in part, derive from contacts with alien governments. At any rate it is more than probable that no system existed among the Shilluk whereby all wrongs were righted by the direct intervention of the *reth* and his representatives.

We are not here concerned with political systems, but with the nature of customary law as it is applied today. This law is at basis derived from customary procedures in which arbitration and compromise prevailed; but in recent years it has acquired a consistency, and in some cases a rigidity, probably unknown in the past. A body of case law has arisen from precedents made in the courts, and although some laws may derive from the direct intervention of the Administration, others are part of a purely spontaneous process. It is also noticeable that many claims now upheld

[1] 'Observations on the Shilluk of the Upper Nile: The laws of homicide and the legal functions of the *reth*.' *Africa*, xxii. 2, 1952. I am again indebted to the Sudan Government for permission to quote from official reports and to Mr. W. P. G. Thomson and Mr. J. L. Baker for comments and suggestions.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

is in accordance with Shilluk tradition, but the kings prior to this period appear to have had a stability of tenure unknown during the latter half of the nineteenth century.[1] The opposition sprang from resentment of an excessive and often oppressive use of the powers accorded to him and also from a reaction to the interference of an alien government, for many of the *reths* of that period were no more than puppets.

reth Kwathker, who was the *reth* of the Shilluk at the time of the first arrival of the Turkish 'Mudir' at Fashoda, was deposed and replaced by a nominee called Ajang Nyidhok, who was never accepted by the southern Shilluk.[2] A civil war between the north and the Government on one side supporting Ajang, and the south supporting Kwathker followed. The south was defeated, and Kwathker died in chains at Fashoda.[3] Ajang was himself deposed shortly afterwards and the Turks attempted to administer the Shilluk without a *reth* at all. This policy was, however, entirely unsuccessful and, after a clash which resulted in a massacre of Government troops at Kaka in 1875, Kweikon, son of Kwathker, was installed as *reth*. A few years later Kweikon joined the Turkish troops in their attack on the forces of the Mahdi at Jebel Gadir. The Turkish and Shilluk forces were annihilated and Kweikon was killed. Subsequently, after a period of interregnum, Yor, son of *reth* Akoc, who had visited the Mahdi and received his support, installed himself at Fashoda. The support of the *Mahdia*, however, did not continue under the régime of the Khalifa Abdullahi, and Yor was finally captured and beheaded by the Emir Zeki Tumal near Tonga. His successor was Kur, another son of *reth* Nyidhok, who was a Mahdist puppet and called by them Abdel Fadil. During Kur's absence in Omdurman, Akol, a son of Kwathker, supported by the southern Shilluk attempted a *coup d'état*, but was unsuccessful owing to the intervention of the northern Shilluk. The present Government arrived in 1898, and Kur remained in power until 1903, when he was deposed for 'unjust and oppressive' actions against his people. He was replaced by Fadiet, a Government nominee, who died in 1917. After a show of opposition by the southern Shilluk, who supported Coti, son of *reth* Ajang, Fafiti, son of Yor, was finally installed at Fashoda in 1917 and ruled until 1943. He was followed in quick succession by Anei wad Kur, who died less than two years after his installation, and Dak wad Fadiet, who died in 1951. The present *reth*-elect, not yet formally installed, is Kur wad Fafiti.

Throughout this period, administration was carried out through the agency of the *reth*, although there were frequent attempts to increase the authority of local chiefs, formed into Chiefs' Courts. It may be noted also that there were occasional attempts to oust Fafiti in favour of rivals, the most notable of whom was Nyawelo wad Kur who was exiled in 1932. These attempts were, however, severely suppressed by the Government and it is impossible even to guess whether they would have been successful, if the reigning *reth* had not enjoyed an artificial stability of tenure provided by the Government. During this period the policy of the Government was to establish tribunals throughout the country from which final appeal lay to the *reth* himself. The extent of the jurisdiction of these tribunals has varied considerably from time to time, the boundaries being altered, for administrative convenience, to approximate to the

[1] See Hofmayr, *Die Schilluk*, 1925, and also Westermann, *The Shilluk People*, 1912, on traditions about the early *reths*.

[2] Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 75, i.e. those living in Lusk. The division into Lusk and Gerr has had not only ritual but political significance.

[3] Kodok—Turkish Province Headquarters and called by them Fashoda. Fashoda is in fact the capital of the *reth* and lies some fifteen miles south of Kodok.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

traditional divisions of Shilluk country. From the early years of administration, with frequent minor adjustments, until 1949 these divisions were eleven in number,[1] but they were recently amalgamated to form five.

These historical factors have been summarized here to show how difficult it is to formulate definite conclusions on the *reth*'s political authority. According to tradition and to what the Shilluk will often themselves say, he has absolute powers of intervention to suppress public disturbances, to give judgement in certain disputes and, moreover, to execute those judgements. In fact, in recent years, and possibly at times during the latter half of the nineteenth century, this theoretical authority has had the backing of an alien government and may for this reason have been exaggerated beyond what was actually enforceable in earlier times. There is, therefore, throughout Shilluk history in the last hundred years a divergence of theory and fact, and one does not know how much of the theory has been created by external influences. It will be realized that this problem is also of some importance in a theoretical study of primitive legal systems, for we wish to know whether the laws were, in fact, enforceable, whether the Shilluk monarchy, apart from external influences, represents ' politically organized society ', and whether certain laws were enforced and legal sanctions applied in such a manner as to justify the use of the term ' public law '.

There is little evidence of legal procedures during the Turkish régime and none during the *Mahdia*. Schweinfurth writing, in 1868, a lucid account of a Shilluk dispute heard by the Turkish 'Mudir' or Governor at Fashoda, says: ' He (the Mudir) was continually being called upon to adjust the disputes of natives, who appealed to his judgement even in their most private concerns. . . .' After describing the unsuccessful plea of a Shilluk girl for permission to marry her lover who had not enough cattle to pay the bridewealth, he adds, ' This was not a very comforting decision, but it showed me plainly how that it was ever his rule to recognize the customs of the country'.[2] Schweinfurth also gives a vivid picture of the Shilluk king at this period.

> In the Mudir's verandah I also made acquaintance with a Shillook chief, who had entirely surrendered to the Egyptian Government, and was now, as the Governor expressed himself, ' coming to his senses.' There was no external indication whatever of his rank. . . . He retained now but a shadow of his former power; his better days were gone, days in which, attended by a council of ancestral state, he had swayed the sceptre of patriarchal dignity. Of all the negro races which occupy the entire district of the Nile, the Shillooks used to uphold the most perfectly regulated government. . . . But now this condition is all changed, and everything has disappeared which gave this independent and primitive people their most striking characteristics.[3]

There are, of course, other references to the indigenous administration of the Shilluk based on the division of the country into provinces and settlements with a representative of the *reth* in charge of each, and the *reth* himself as the ultimate authority. Many writers therefore assume that there existed a highly organized system; more highly organized than the evidence warrants. It is natural that the present

[1] See Howell and Thomson, op. cit., p. 6.

[2] Schweinfurth, G., *The Heart of Africa*, London, 1878.

[3] Schweinfurth, op. cit., p. 19. He is here referring to the Turkish puppet Ajang wad Nyidhok. He mentions later that 'Kaggar' (presumably Kwathker), another descendant of the ancient reigning family, still maintained himself as an 'uncontrolled sovereign' in the southern part of the Shilluk country.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

have no value in defence.[1] The *bany* is the symbol of this aggressive spirit. The *bany* himself is frequently an elderly man, and not a 'fire-brand' and his functions are passive. He is appointed, just like any other Chief, and when his people go to war he is carried as a mascot on a bed. He takes no active part and, like most Shilluk institutions of a seditious nature, the *bany*, like the *nyireth*, is powerless in himself and depends on public support.

On this occasion Nyigir settlement appointed a *bany* and the Chief failed to report the matter to the *reth*, or to the District Commissioner. A few days later Nyigir carried their *bany* into Golbainy, the neighbouring settlement to the north, and behaved in an aggressive manner, singing and carrying their shields. This challenging demonstration was reported in Fashoda settlement next day, though the royal capital was avoided. The *reth* himself, hearing singing of which he had not been notified personally, intervened between Nyigir, lined up on their border and carrying their *bany*, and Fashoda who were mobilizing to defend themselves . . . An old feud exists between Nyigir and Fashoda. In the time of *reth* Nyidhok (*circa* 1840) Nyigir attacked and burned the Royal Village of Fashoda. In 1917 Nyigir killed a Government policeman and assistance had to be obtained from Malakal and Tewfikia (where the mounted police had recently gone from Kodok). Nyigir is the largest Shilluk section, and has a strong element of intractable *kwareth*, all closely related and descendants of *reth* Awin, who, I know from experience, are hard to control. As far as I can judge this was not a seditious movement against the *reth* himself, but a major fight round Fashoda might have led to anything.[2]

I have quoted this incident, as it is recorded, not as evidence of subversive action against the person of the *reth*, or any threat to depose him, but because it is clear that the *reth* is concerned, even had the incident been farther removed than his own capital, in maintaining peaceful relations between the settlements. Further, the incident is typical of the hostilities which have so frequently occurred and been sustained for long periods. Referring to *reth* Fadiet's time (1903–17) Hofmayr says:

> There was a great fight between Owaci and Tworo. Banholzer relates: 'A man from Owaci had been bewitched in Tworo and was kept in a village. They asked him how many men had been killed in the last fighting, but he refused to answer. Thereupon he was murdered and his body thrown into the river and anchored by wooden pegs, but the body broke away and floated downstream. The people of Owaci got to hear of it and caused the great fight in which many Tworo people were killed. The survivors fled to the other bank of the river and until now the Tworo people say they are allowed to kill Owaci people as the price of blood.'[3]

This feud, referred to by Hofmayr in 1905, is of particular interest because there are accurate records of its continuance later. For example, between the years 1931 and 1932 there were thirteen incidents of clashes and several of homicide, and during this period twenty-seven men of Thworo and nineteen of Owaci were killed and larger numbers were wounded. The feud was finally settled in 1932 by a peace ceremony performed by the *reth* which will be described later.

These feuds, and in particular the feuds between Owaci and Thworo, have been mentioned because they show a persistence which does not seem characteristic of feuds among the Nuer and the Dinka, and also because casualties were very numerous.

[1] The meaning of this statement is not clear. If there is aggression there must presumably also be defence.

[2] Thomson, W. P. G., unpublished Government Records.

[3] Hofmayr, op. cit.

10: Riad E-4.5 (1955) 1955 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

OF FUNG AND SHILLUK

Mohamed Riad

Any one who deals with either the Fung or the Shilluk, historians as well as anthropologists, must say a word about the possible relationship between the two kingdoms. Many pages have been written on this subject by well known writers, but the lack of a good comparative study that would envisage the whole problem in its various aspects is noted in some of these works. Others were motivated by "a prioristic" conceptions, or one-sidedness, or depended entirely upon certain points, or "... fever for verbal similarities". 1)

The last word in the controversy has not yet been said, and most probably will not be said. I do not contend that this paper will put an end to the controversies, but I think that by taking into consideration the historical as well as the anthropological points of view, we can reach a safe stage at which we can build our own point towards this complicated subject.

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A) The PROBLEM :

The story begins in 1790, the year James Bruce of Kinnaird -an English traveller- published a voluminous work describing his journey to discover the sources of the Nile, which took place between 1768 and 1773. In 1772 Bruce was in Sennar, the capital of the Fung Kingdom, which was the most important and the most powerful state of the Eastern Sudan in the Middle-Ages. In this city Bruce got a glimpse of history of Kingdoms and tribal movements in this part of Africa. Bruce transmits to us what he heard (and maybe what he imagined) 2) in such a statement:

> "In the year 1504, a black nation, hitherto unknown, inhabiting the western banks of the Bahr el Abiad (White Nile) in about latitude 13, made a descent in a multitude of canoes or boats upon the Arab provinces ..... This race of negroes is in their own country called Shillook .... At the establishing of this monarchy the king and the whole nation of

1) Arkell was so described by Chataway, p.117

2) It is agreed upon that Bruce always imagined many things, and in his writings pictured himself as a hero who escaped dangers through his bravery etc. ... Read a short description of Bruce's character in Crawford, pp. 253-254

10: Riad E-4,5 (1955) 1955 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

174 According to these two authors, the Shilluk made an attack on the Arabs and defeated them; the Arabs were reduced to a tributary state under the Shilluk. Arkell elaborates on the subject with his European mentality of statesman, and proceeds to say that the Shilluk, by a mastery of diplomacy, changed the injured pride of the Arabs to complete alliance with them, by diverting their attention to a common foe. To such high diplomacy, the Alwa kingdom fell as a sacrifice. 34) Thus, the downfall of the Alwa kingdom was undertaken by a combined Shilluk-Arab force !!

175 We may now proceed to give a short historical outline of the Fung kingdom, leaving this controversial point to be discussed below.

In 1534 Amara Dunkas died, leaving a vast realm which extended northward to the third cataract, including Dongola, and eastward to the Red Sea; but Suakin was a Turkish possession at that time. The White Nile probably marked the western border to latitude 13°, whence northwards the country to the west bank, which comprised Arabs from the Jaalin group, must have been under the rule of the Viceroy of Sennar residing at Gerri. To the south, the Fung border included some provinces of present Ethiopia, namely Gubba, Ganjar, and Fadasi. The border in southern Gezira was not clear, but sporadic hints indicate that the Fung expanded steadily southwards. This point will also be discussed later.

The next expansion of the Fung was during the reign of King Abdul Qader, the second or third king. He reduced Jebel Gule, and converted the inhabitants to Islam. The third expansion was also to the south-west. King Baadi Abu Dign crossed the White Nile in 1642, invaded the Tegali Moslem kingdom and reduced it to a tributary state. He also "attacked the Shilluk negroes and took a large number of slaves". 35)

In Fung history, there were two wars with Abyssinia in which there was no decisive result, except for the routing of most of the Abyssinian king's army in the second war. But these wars are not relevant to our subject.

In the year 1747, during the reign of King Baadi Abu Shillukh, 36) the Fung Empire reached the zenith of its expansion. The whole of Kordofan was won to the Funge by a man called Mohamed Abu El Keilik. During a battle with the Darfur Army, the Fung were first defeated, "the troops fled, but were rallied by Mohamed Abu El Keilik and his sons, who defeated the Army of the Furs, led

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34) Arkell, (A), p.
35) Westermann, p. LV.
36) Westermann, p. LV, mis-spells his name, and writes it as Gnadi Abu Shilluk, probably he was motivated by the theory of the Shilluk origin of the Fung, and found in the name another backing to the theory, forgetting that by adding "h" at the end, the word would mean -in Sudanese Arabic- the different modes of face scares used until now in the Arabic Sudan. Abu Shillukh is not a name, but a nickname, and we find it frequent that nicknames were given to many Fung kings, according to their characteristics.

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by Sultan of the Kunjara and Sheikh of the Musabaat at Shaukata ... On the news of Abu El Keilik's victories and the courage he displayed reaching Sennar, the king appointed him commander-in-chief; he was also made 'Sheikh' of Kordofan, and granted the viziership (of the kingdom) ..." 37) 175

With the success of Abu El Keilik, the downfall of the real Fung kings began, and from that time on the government was in the hands of the ministers. Abu El Keilik is said to be from the Hamag, a section of Fung subjects we will discuss later. But it is also said that he is of Arab descent, from the Gammu'ia tribe, and his mother was a Hamag. At any rate the kings were deposed at the wish of the ministers, and the last stand of the kings was smashed with great slaughter in the reign of King Adlan II (1776-1788, after which the power of the ministers was undisputed until 1820, when the Egyptian Army put an end to the already decayed Fung kingdom.

The Fung kingdom was, from the very start, founded on an alliance between the Fung leader and the Arab leader of the northern Arab tribes, i.e. a dual system. The kingdom remained so until the very end, and that was the major political division of the country. Within each part of the kingdom there were semi-independent states or chieftainships. In the north there was the Shaiqia, Shendi, and El-Dumer. In the south there were Fazogli, Gule, Khasha al Bahr and Koili. The Shukrria, a powerful Arab tribe in the central Butana plains, was to a certain extent independent. It is also said that there were provinces of which we do not know much regarding their political organization and their boundaries. 38) These are Jebel Moya, Abud, both in central Gezira, Beila, and Teawa in the southern Butana. Sennar itself, while being the capital of the whole kingdom, exercised direct government on the whole of northern Gezira up to the junction of the White and Blue Niles. Gerri was the seat of the vicaroys of the northern part of the kingdom, and its direct rule was said to extend on the eastern bank of the Blue Nile as far south as the confluence of the river Dinder, and eastwards to the Eritrean border.

As may now be seen, the kingdom was a federation of petty states, corresponding to a large extent to the tribal as well as the geographical units within a large framework of a state under the Fung dynasty.

The racial elements in this kingdom ranged from Negros and Negroids to "Hamites" and "Semites". The broader character of the northern part is undisputedly Caucasian, while the south was an outspoken Negro-land. Reciprocal migrations in both directions, North and South, brought about the present ethnic melange. 174

37) Jackson, pp. 50-51

38) ibid, p. 102

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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remnant, *derimo olang*[5]. These blacks in time also became *Collo* and the clan of Nyikang, originally the *Collo* par excellence, became known as *Kwar Reth*[6] in distinction from the remainder. 173

Shortly after his defeat at the battle of Wau, Nyikang had disappeared in a whirl-wind and his son Dak succeeded him as *Reth*. Dak was a great warrior and after expelling the *Fun* raided the country as far north as the latitude of El Dueim. In this he met little opposition. The main powers then existing were the kingdom of Tegale to the west and that of the Fung to the east, and the Shilluk seemed to have dominated the White Nile until about 1800. The northern boundary of the Shilluk country was, however, fixed by Dak at the site of the village of Tworokit (opposite Jebel Ahmed Agha), the country beyond being considered (as it is to this day described) as "raiding country."[7]

The period from Dak's campaigns to the arrival of the Arab slave trader El Fiki Mohammed Kheir in the reign of *Reth* Kwadhker (approximately 1850) is obscure. There are accounts of fighting with the Anuak; the Dinka appear to have arrived from the south-west in the reign of *Reth* Tugo (about 1750) and the Nuer to have reached Zeraf Island a little later. When the first Mudir of Fashoda[8] took up his position at Kodok in 1867 *Reth* Kwadhker was reigning and the distribution of neighbouring tribes was approximately as it is to-day. 175

Sir Samuel Baker describes how he caught this Mudir in the scandalous act of arresting Shilluk for non-payment of taxes (a proceeding not unknown to-day) and also how he interviewed the ex-*Reth* Kwadhker who had by then been deposed by the Mudir in favour of the Turkish puppet Ajang Nyidhok. At this period there was serious civil war between the northern half of the kingdom, supporting the usurper Ajang and the Government, and the southern half, supporting the deposed Kwadhker. Finally after Kwadhker had for many years 175 648 669

5. This may be translated "black battalions."

6. *Kwar* is a collective word meaning "descendants." Thus *Kwar Oman* means the descendants of Oman and *Kwar Reth* means the descendants of the (original) *Reth*, that is Nyikang.

7. "*pathe manyo.*"

8. Ali Bey Kurdi.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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eluded capture the Mudir lured him into his encampment at Lul and took him to Kodok where he ultimately died a prisoner.

Reth Ajang fell from favour over suspected complicity in the killing of some government troops engaged in an attempt to collect rifles from the tribe, and was hanged at Kodok. Thereafter the Mudir, Yusef Bey, decided to govern the tribe without a *Reth* and local chiefs were accordingly appointed throughout the country. This policy was evidently unsuccessful and in October 1875 Romolo Gessi, who happened to be passing in a steamer, heard from the Mudir that the garrison at Kaka, which consisted then of some 24 soldiers with one cannon, was being besieged by the tribe. He consented to take a relief party there. This party, 140 strong, landed at Kaka and was ambushed and killed almost to a man, Gessi being a spectator from the steamer.

This event caused the recall of Ali Bey Kurdi to Fashoda. He hanged many of the recently appointed chiefs and appointed as *Reth* Kwiekon a son of Kwadhker. Rashid Bey relieved Ali Bey Kurdi in about 1880.

In 1881 the Mahdi moved to Jebel Gadir. Rashid Bey, apparently on his own initiative, took a force variously estimated from 400 to 1400 strong which included *Reth* Kwiekon and marched by an inland route to Jebel Gadir in the hope of capturing the Mahdi. Almost the entire force was killed, including the Mudir and Kwiekon.

Kodok then became one of the marooned garrisons. A certain Jok Akoc[9] succeeded Kwiekon, but neither he nor the remaining vestiges of Government had much control over the tribe. Yor Akoc (father of the present *Reth* Fafiti and brother of Jok) went to El Obeid to pay respects to the Mahdi and got himself appointed *Reth*. Later, when the garrison left Kodok, Yor installed himself at Fashoda.

However the tribe was not to be left long in peace. During the famine in Omdurman the Emir Abbas Sami came in the S.S. *Safia* with a large body of Ta'aisha to feed off the country. *Reth* Yor did not co-operate in this scheme to the Emir's satisfaction and the following year Zeki Tummal, who had been campaigning in Abyssinia, was

9. Jok was never officially *Reth* and was superseded by his brother Yor almost at once.

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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ordered to punish this recalcitrance. This he did with some effect. He set up a well-defended encampment at Fadiang (about six miles south of Kodok) and thence made repeated raids on the tribe. The Shilluk fled across the river and the Emir laid waste the whole country, succeeding finally in arresting *Reth* Yor whom he had beheaded at Fadiang. 175 ● 648

Kur Nyidhok, a brother of the puppet King Ajang, had joined the forces of Zeki Tummal and when the latter left for Omdurman he took Kur to pay homage to the Khalifa Abdullahi. No sooner had Kur gone than Akol, another of Kwadhker sons, arose as a pretender in the south, and was barely prevented from effecting his entry into Fashoda by the defeat of his supporters at the hands of a force comprising all the sections from Burbok to Both at the battle of Kwom. This attempt was punished by Kur on his return from Omdurman at the battle of Dettim where Akol's supporters were defeated and Akol himself forced to retire to Abujop on the Sobat. Kur was *Reth* at the time of Marchand's arrival at Kodok, but was deposed by the present Government in 1903 and replaced by Akol's brother Fadiet. Fadiet was probably done to death in the traditional manner, by being suffocated by some of his wives, and Fafiti, son of Yor Akoc, was appointed. It is said that in this election the Mamur of Kodok was partial and that he contrived the appointment against the wishes of the tribe. This, if in any way true, has been much exaggerated. There was normal rivalry between Coti, son of Ajang, and Fafiti. Ajang had been a puppet of the Turkish Government and, having never been ceremonially installed in Fashoda, had never really been *Reth*. Coti's claim was therefore poor. Fafiti was supported by Bol Ayuel, Chief of Golbañ, and Coti by Ajang Agwet, Chief of Debalo. The Chiefs of Golbañ and Debalo are *ex officio* primarily responsible for electing the new *Reth* and as these two functionaries differed feeling was naturally high. The southern half of the country were antagonised by Fafiti's appointment and their allegiance to him accordingly remains to this day less sincere.

In 1932, largely owing to famine, Fafiti's prestige sank low and Coti's cousin, Nyaweilo Kur, conspired to kill him. The arrest and exile of Nyaweilo improved Fafiti's position and his prestige has probably grown in the last nine years. [669]

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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APPENDIX IV.

TABLE SHOWING ARRANGEMENT OF SETTLEMENTS INTO CONFEDERACIES AT THE TIME OF THE MAHDIA AND THEIR PRESENT GROUPING INTO DIVISIONS.

Divisions (1940)	Settlements	Assessed number of adult males. (in 1936)	Arrangement of Confederacies in the time of the Mahdia.
Muomo	Thworokit	117	Muomo
	Manam	90	
	Muomo	243	
	Aguoro	99	
	Thor	100	
	Abuor	64	
	Akurwa	94	
Delal	Nun	139	Delal
	Arumboth....	88	
	Delal Ajak	138	
	Nyirudo	88	
	Arueth	57	
Atoduoi	Thuro	197	Athoduoi
	Dimoth	66	
	Athoduoi	310	
	Nyilec	144	Abiangyai
	Fanyikang	50	
	Ogod	101	
Detwok	Abiangyai	174	Oticogo
	Mal	82	
	Burbuk	52	
	Fabiu	162	
	Oticogo	77	
	Detwok	140	
	Alel	97	
	Kwocung	73	
	Acago	77	
	Ataro	62	
Golbaß	Golo	377	Golbaß
	Kodok	550	
	Lemo	143	
	Fadiang	284	
	Golbaß	226	
	Nyigir	466	
OLD BOUNDARY BETWEEN GER AND LUAK.			
Fashoda	Wadman	170	Kwom
	Aguoro	113	
	Kwom	191	
	Lul....	250	
	Yoß	173	
	Thuolong	220	
	Biu....	62	
	Fabur	86	
	Bol....	115	
	Nyingar	85	
	Both	65	

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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Divisions (1940)	Settlements	Assessed number of adult males. (in 1936)	Arrangement of Confederacies in the time of the Mahdia.
New boundary between Ger and Luak.			
Ogod	Fathau	73	Ogod
	Fadit	108	
	Wau	243	
	Ogol Pac	140	
	Ogod Butu	176	
	Ogod Famadh	128	
Malakal	Malakal Fathuoro	289	Malakal
	Malakal Acop Puot	106	
	Malakal Ocolo	61	
	Malakal Ayowangen	72	
	Wij Malakal	92	
	Malakal Thuorobesnyo	71	
	Obwa	357	Awarajuok
	Awarajuok	269	
	Athokong	129	
Dettim	Adodo	141	Dettim
	Dur	232	
	Thuoro Dettim	196	
	Owaci	213	Fanyidwai
	Obai Abujop	161	
	Obai Dego	101	
	Fakang	214	Fakang
Fanyidwai	Falo	216	Fanyidwai
	Fathuoro	95	
	Adhidhiang	117	
	Fanyidwai Pac	107	
	Faju	267	
	Abujop	210	
	Odwar	63	
Nyijok	Nyijok	226	non existent
	Nyanacan	73	
	Nagdiar	176	
Fanyikang	Aqunjuok	43	Fanyikang
	Nyiyar	128	
	Fakwar	80	
	Akonare	67	
	Oduojo	119	
	Nyilual	94	
	Bur	114	
	Wilnyang	150	
	Dyel	101	
	Wuobo	78	
	Nyilwak	279	
	Dor	97	
	Odong Tugo	100	
Tonga	Dil	96	Nyibang
	Nyijwado	124	
	Dhok Alal	117	
	Yom	355	Tonga (Tung)
	Atigo	145	
	Nyibodo	132	
	Ayadhajo	108	
	Pafunjo	104	

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19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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In Part III the effigies of these kings are referred to simply as Nyikang and Dak, for they are thus referred to by the Shilluk. 104

Mudir—the Turkish governor of a province, still used in Arabic for a provincial governor.

Khor—Arabic for watercourse; commonly used in the Sudan.

N.B. In the spelling of Shilluk words the sound Ch is represented by "c" in accordance with the agreement made at the Rejaf Language Conference. [194]

RECENT SHILLUK HISTORY

(W.P.G.T.)

From the time when the Turkish Government first occupied Kodok, and called it Fashoda[8] in 1867, the history of the *rethship* has been disturbed; successions have either produced large factions and revolts among the Shilluk, or else successive governments have had to step in to avert major civil war within the tribe. 175 643

During the time of the Turkish regime, the Mahdia, and the early years of the present government, the position of the reigning *reth* was always insecure: he was at any time liable to be ambushed and killed by an ambitious *nyireth*, who fancied his chances of gaining the support of the tribe, and becoming *reth*, in accordance with Shilluk tradition; but he was also liable to be the victim of informations laid against him to the authorities, and to be deposed, or killed by government.

Reth Kwathker, who was reigning at the time of the Turkish occupation, was deposed by the *mudir* of Fashoda on a suspicion of disloyalty, (Note 2) and replaced by a nominee Ajang Nyidhok, who was never accepted by the southern Shilluk. This produced civil war

8. Fashoda the capital of the *reth* is actually 11 miles upstream of Kodok.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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between the north and the government on the one side and the south on the other. Kwathker was captured and died in chains in Fashoda gaol. Ajang Nyidhok, who had never been tribally installed, was soon deposed also on ground of disloyalty, and the *reth*ship was abolished by the *mudir*.

The experiment of administering the Shilluk without a *reth* did not work, and the troubles of the government were if anything increased. After a massacre of government troops at Kaka in 1875, the experiment was given up, and Kweikwon, a son of *reth* Kwathker was appointed *reth*. Some five years later in 1881, Kweikwon went on an expedition with the *mudir* of Fashoda to attack the Mahdi at Jebel Gadir in the eastern Nuba Mountains. The force was annihilated, and Kweikwon and the *mudir* were both killed.

An interregnum then occurred, until Yor Akoc, having gone to El Obeid and received the blessing of the Mahdi, installed himself in Fashoda. Relations with the Mahdi, however, and his sucessor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, did not long remain cordial. The Shilluk people were expected to provide corn and slaves in abundance, and when *reth* Yor failed to do so willingly, the wrath of the Khalifa descended upon him. The Emir Zeki Tummal set up a fort near Kodok, and ravaged the Shilluk country from top to bottom, eventually capturing *reth* Yor near Tonga and beheading him in the Dervish camp.

Kur Nyidhok, a first cousin of Kwathker, threw in his lot with the Emir, and went to Omdurman to pay homage to the Khalifa, who confirmed him as *reth*, and called him Abd el Fadil. While Kur was away in Omdurman, Akol, a son of Kwathker, raised a faction, and after a struggle, was prevented by the northern Shilluk from installing himself in Fashoda. *Reth* Kur lasted till 1903, when he was deposed by the present government on the grounds that his rule was unjust and oppressive; he may have been a victim of slanderous reports sent in to Kodok by eligible *nyireth*.

He was replaced by Fadiet, a son of Kwathker, a government nominee.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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Fadiet died in 1917, and once more the Shilluk were divided between Fafiti Yor and Coti the son of the Turkish puppet Ajang, with the south supporting the latter; the government, had to intervene and instal and protect Fafiti by force. 175 643

From this short account it can readily be seen that the customary procedure of the *reth's* election had not taken place undisturbed for nearly one hundred years and perhaps much longer.

The effect of this stormy history in 1943 made it very difficult for the elders to remember what the procedure was in all the details. There was a constant urge to get back to the old tradition, but often quite important items were omitted or forgotten, and had to be done at the last minute in a hurry. Not even Shilluk custom stands still; it varies with the capacities of people's memories and also it is affected by outside influences. It is not a hard and fast pattern into which everything must fit. The Shilluk would like it to be, but are not always equal to the task. Certain aspects of the traditional ceremonies cannot now take place; it is no longer practicable to keep up the traditions of Dak, the son of Nyikang and great Shilluk conqueror. For example in days gone by, two subsections of the Shilluk, Akwabai near Fashoda and Abuor near Kaka, used to raid north to get the various things required in the ceremonies for the installation of the *reth*. There is now a tendency to buy these things in Kosti market. 178 643

The events which we describe fall in to four main periods:— 643

1. The death and burial of *reth* Fafiti Yor and the funeral dances held for him.
2. The election of Anei Kur.
3. The formal installation of *reth* Anei in Fashoda.[9]
4. Subsequent events which have occurred after his installation, which were motivated by a desire to confirm the *reth*, and which throw light on the nature and function of the Shilluk monarchy.

9. During the ceremonies of installation we were ably assisted by other observers, notably Mr. John Longe and the Rev. D. McClure.

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944)1946
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him no malice, though his election has practically taken away their chances of becoming *reth* in future. All the same there remains potential danger to the new *reth*-elect from an angry or ambitious *nyireth* trying to ambush him by night. No armed rising is now likely, but an individual challenge remains a possibility for the *reth* till the end of his days. 643 644 [669]

The initial ceremonies are simple, and soon over. There remains an interval for the *reth*-elect, until he is installed by Nyikang. The funeral obsequies of his predecessor are largely arranged by others, though he has a say in fixing dates and procedure. 643 [766]

A final word may be said upon the part played by the intervention of government in this and previous elections. As explained above elections have taken place in 1903 and 1917 in the time of the present government, and before that there was a period of uncertainty, sometimes amounting to civil war during the Mahdia and "Turkia". There is what might be called a "traditional" tendency towards civil war at the time of the election of a *reth*, which is the customary way out of an impasse caused by the disagreement of the two "kingmakers". Since the advent of the present government steps have been taken to get the *reth* elected by peaceful means, in spite of the disagreement. 175 643 648

In 1903 the governor at Kodok himself presided at the election, and more or less dictated the choice of Fadiet as *reth* in place of Kur. Kur had appeared somewhat too oriental in his methods, and it was thought that Fadiet would be more amenable as a government nominee. This proved to be the case, but the fact that he was nominated by government made him of little political importance in the tribe.

In 1917 a disagreemsnt between the king-makers threatened civil war, and the governor had to instal Fafiti and protect him by a detachment of troops. This again detracted from his importance as tribal head.

In 1943 the kingmakers reached agreement, and government

19: Howell & Thomson E, G-5 (1943-1944) 1946
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had nothing to do except to warn the Shilluk that a *reth* chosen by violence would not be accepted by government.

During the interval between the death of a *reth* and the final installation of a successor the Shilluk lack, in a certain degree, their chief mediator with Nyikang and God, and the *reth*-elect lacks certain attributes of divinity, which are bestowed upon him later by Nyikang. Both parties express this inadequacy by certain prohibitions on their behaviour, many of which, in the case of the *reth* at any rate, are not signs of mourning but signs of respect to Nyikang, as they endure till his installation, and do not in all cases cease with the wake of the deceased. It is forbidden for Shilluk to light grass fires (except perhaps along the drying marshes, by the river banks) between the death of one *reth* and the installation of his successor. Any offender is liable to a fine. There are two types of building among the Shilluk; walls are built from mud alone laid in circular layers, or else a framework of millet stalks is first erected and then packed with mud outside and in. The latter technique is regarded as inferior; the former is the royal or divine style of building. Fashoda is built like that, and all the shrines to Nyikang, *reths* and *nyireths* throughout the country. Men of substance also build their houses after this fashion, and it seems as if this may have been the original traditional form of Shilluk building, and the other form is looked upon as something foreign. This royal style of building is forbidden in the same way as the burning of grass. It is said that the prohibition upon this royal style of building is a sign of respect to Nyikang; "you must not build in Nyikang's style, while Nyikang's houses are down". Nyikang's houses are not actually thrown down, except the great shrine of Fanyikang, but each shrine of Nyikang is rebuilt by each new *reth*, or should be; and there is a general feeling that there is a rebirth of the whole Nyikang tradition at the installation of a *reth*. During the period of the interregnum there is a general feeling that something has passed away from the Shilluk, and requires renewing by Nyikang's reappearance, and until Nyikang himself has come to renew his contact with the Shilluk the people mark the interval by abstaining from building in the way they associate with Nyikang. Building of the inferior style

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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Chapter V

A LITTLE HISTORY

Before going on to tell of the government and customs of that tribe of the Southern Sudan whose acquaintance we have already made, it might be as well to pause awhile, and briefly to relate what is known of the history of that country of which their land forms a part. 175

The Sudan (Bilad-el-Sudan: The Country of the Blacks) is that great part of Central Africa which lies north of the Equator between the 5th and the 22nd parallels. Nearly 1,000,000 square miles in area, it is bounded on the north by the Libyan Desert and Egypt, east by the Red Sea, Eritrea and Abyssinia, south by Kenya, Uganda and the Belgian Congo, and west by French Equatorial Africa. Since the great river Nile which flows throughout the length of the Sudan and Egypt is the chief means of communication and an easy method of transport between the two countries, it is to be expected that earliest historical records recount instances of trading and raiding from one country to the other. [101]

By about 2000 B.C. the Egyptians with their vastly superior culture had made great inroads into the northern regions of the Sudan, had founded colonies, built a large fortified town and established a chain of fortifications along the Nile. This colonization lasted for some 200 years and about 1700 B.C. the colonists were withdrawn apparently to assist in the defence of the mother country then in the process of being invaded and conquered by Asiatic tribes, the Hyksos. The Hyksos' domination of Egypt lasted for over a century, but eventually the invaders were expelled and the Egyptians, once more secure in their own country, resumed their colonization of the Sudan. This second period lasted until about 1000 B.C. when, with the decline of the Egyptian 175 648

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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175 Empire, the Egyptians once more disappeared from Sudanese
648 history.

For the next 200 years there is a gap in the records of relationship between the two countries, but then we find that the rôles of conquerors and conquered are reversed, and that Sudanese kings have successfully invaded and taken possession of Egypt and reign there as Pharaohs. The Sudanese dynasty in Egypt came to an end when the Assyrian hordes swept over the land in 660 B.C. but it continued in the Sudan itself in two separate kingdoms for nearly another 1,000 years, the one kingdom being destroyed by the Romans in 23 B.C. and the other overthrown by the Abyssinians in 350 A.D.

After this there is another blank in Sudan history covering the next 200 years until in 540 A.D. Christian missionaries reached the country from Asia Minor, having been sent by the Empress Theodora of Constantinople. Christianity spread rapidly over Northern Sudan and survived in that region in the north until the land was overrun by Mahomedans from Egypt in 1340, and in the south—that is, as far south as the country round the junction of the two Niles—until about 1500, when there, too, it succumbed to the ever encroaching tide of Moslemism. The next 300 years is a record of inter-tribal fighting and internecine warfare, as, lacking a powerful central authority, the various petty sheikhs incessantly preyed one upon another. The country was thus reduced to anarchy and was easy spoil for the organized invasion which came from Egypt in 1821.

This date may be said to mark the beginning of the modern history of the Sudan. The invasion was made by Mohammed Ali Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt, then a dependency of Turkey, and thus the conquest was made in the name of the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire. Mohammed Ali lost no time in establishing the country on an organized basis. It was divided into provinces and districts under Egyptian and Turkish officers directed from a Governor-Generalate at the newly founded town of Khartoum, built at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles. Mohammed

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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Ali's conquest of the Sudan was not for the purpose of bringing peace and prosperity to that unhappy country. He looked upon it as a vast milch cow whose yield was to supply him with the means of realizing his great ambition: the establishment of himself and his descendants as rulers of Egypt and the Sudan, completely independent of Turkey. Hence the primary occupation of the new government was the collecting of revenue in the form of tribute to fill Mohammed Ali's war chest, and of slaves to swell the ranks of the new Egyptian Army he was founding to wage war against his Turkish overlord. Frequent raids were made along the White Nile among the helpless pagan tribes for the purpose of capturing slaves both for recruits for the army and for domestic labour. Mohammed Ali attained his cherished title of independent ruler of Egypt and Governor of the Sudan in 1841, but this achievement did not stay his rapacity or that of his successors and their lieutenants. Indeed during the ensuing years the traffic in human lives reached enormous proportions. Better arming of the slavers' private armies and better organization of the raiding parties enabled them to venture further and further south. Huge parcels of land were farmed out to the merchants who found a rich return for their investments among the hapless people of Southern Sudan. Khartoum became the great slave market and clearing house of the Sudan.

With the accession of Ismael as Khedive of Egypt in 1863 the first attempts were made to suppress or at least to diminish the slave traffic and to formulate some kind of progressive policy for the country. He called to his aid such men as Sir Samuel Baker, Colonel Charles Gordon, Rudolf Slatin and Gessi and appointed them as Governors of Provinces with full authority to stamp out the trade in slaves. That the efforts of these men were not more successful (in one year, for instance, Gordon and Gessi captured sixty-three caravans of slaves) was due not only to the strenuous opposition of the slave merchants themselves but also, and indeed mainly, to the corruption in high places among the Egyptian Pashas, most of whom had a keen financial interest in the business

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
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175 648 and had no intention of being deprived of so lucrative a source of wealth. Ismael's schemes for the betterment of the Sudan included the extension of the telegraph from Egypt to Khartoum, the inauguration of a postal system, the founding of a company to develop the agricultural resources of the country and of a steamship company. His reforms, however, were too few and came too late, and moreover he could not implement his authority with sufficient force to remedy the greatest of all the evils under which the country laboured, the slave trade. Whilst Gordon was at hand the traffic had decreased considerably, but with his recall to England in 1879 and replacement as Governor-General by an Egyptian, it revived immediately and flourished with greater vigour than before.

The unhappy Sudanese, crushed by the oppression of their Egyptian overlords and seething with discontent, were ripe for revolt and wanted only someone who would unite them and lead them in rebellion. A leader was found in the person of Mohammed Ahmed, the son of a carpenter, who had gained a reputation as a religious teacher and ascetic. He declared himself to be the Mahdi, the divinely appointed prophet, and proclaimed a holy war against the foreigners in the Sudan. The movement commenced in August 1881, and spread with surprising rapidity. Lack of appreciation of the situation both at Khartoum and Cairo resulted in the small expeditionary force sent to destroy the insurrection being cut to pieces and in the increasing strengthening of the Mahdists. Kordofan and Darfur provinces were overrun, and when at length in the middle of 1883 the Egyptian Government made a supreme effort to stamp out the rebellion, the Mahdist army easily defeated and almost annihilated the force sent out against it. The whole of the Sudan was now open to the Mahdi.

In February 1884 General Gordon returned to the Sudan with instructions from the British Government to withdraw the Egyptian garrisons. He arrived too late to accomplish anything, however, and lost his life when Khartoum fell to the Mahdists in January 1885. With the fall of Khartoum

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and the death of Gordon all outside influence on the Sudan came practically to an end. But the troubles of the unfortunate Sudanese themselves were by no means over. They had merely exchanged one tyranny for another. Six months after Gordon's death the Mahdi also died and was succeeded by his chief lieutenant, the Kalifa Abdullah; under him slavery, pillage and rapine quickly revived, revolts among the disillusioned tribes were ruthlessly and bloodily suppressed and anarchy reigned undisputed for the next thirteen years.

In 1896 preparations were at length completed by the British and Egyptian Governments for the reconquest of the Sudan. A joint Anglo-Egyptian army under the command of Major-General Kitchener, later Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, invaded the country through Egypt, and in a campaign which lasted for two and a half years drove the Mahdist forces steadily before it and finally routed them decisively at the Battle of Omdurman in September 1898. The years of tyranny and oppression were over at last.

The new government of the Sudan took the form of a condominium, that is, a joint administration by England and Egypt by which the two countries pledged themselves to administer the Sudan primarily for the welfare of the Sudanese. The history of the Sudan during the past half century is an eloquent testimony of how well this object has been achieved.

The first step taken was to establish law and order throughout the land. The Governor-Generalate was restored but with the difference that the new holders of this exalted office had a far different conception of their duties and responsibilities than had their pre-Mahdist predecessors. The system of division into Provinces was re-established under British Governors who administered their charge with the assistance of District Commissioners. A police force was created, and gradually peace, order and security was imposed on a land which had enjoyed none of these blessings in all its previous history. Fully alive to the necessity of training the Sudanese in order that he might eventually

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175 take control of the government of his own country, the new
648 Sudan Government took immediate steps to bring education to an almost entirely illiterate people. Less than four years after the Battle of Omdurman, the Gordon Memorial College was opened by Lord Kitchener in the newly-built Khartoum as the nucleus of educational development in the Sudan. Elementary schools were opened to bring the rudi-
[871] ments of education to the peasantry and later, as the need arose, intermediate schools, a technical school and a teacher training college. As the number of literates grew, other departments acquired their own training establishments. The Kitchener School of Medicine and the Lee Stack Laboratories provided for the training of Sudanese doctors, chemists and dispensers; the Atbara Railways School gave the young Sudanese the opportunity to take control of the railway system which covers the northern part of the country
[509] and of the fleet of steamers which operates on the Nile south of Khartoum. In the Law Courts Sudanese advocates plead their causes before Sudanese judges and magistrates who have been trained in the School of Law. The Agricultural and Veterinary branches have their own training establishments, many of the senior police and army officers are Sudanese, and the training of officers in the political and administrative departments is so far advanced that Sudanese District Commissioners and Assistant District Commissioners are now common, and several have been promoted as Deputy-Governors of Provinces.*

648 For some twenty-five years official educational efforts
871 were confined almost exclusively to the peoples of the north.
797 In the south missionary bodies, both Catholic and Protestant, without Government aid or recognition, laboured untiringly among the primitive peoples in their efforts to give them some share at least of the educational benefits enjoyed by their more fortunate brethren in the north. Only in 1926 was Government aid given in small measure to help to defray

* Since this was written all British officials have retired, and except for the Governor-Generalate, Sudanese have taken charge in all departments.

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766 535 at length the drums cease to throb, the last of the animals are sacrificed and the meat distributed to the dancers and the people disperse to their homes. The king is dead. . . .

643 666 642 669 The country has not, however, remained without a king all this time. The period of interregnum is one of disquiet, and there is always the real fear that one of the nyireth may make a bid for the throne. As soon as possible, then, after the king's death, within a few days in fact, the electorate council meets to choose the new king. This council is made up of eleven chiefs of the Colo, the descendants of the original companions of Nyikang, and three members of the royal houses.

175 631 When Nyikang first settled the country he divided it into eleven major districts, appointing a chief to each. These chiefs were all Colo since, as Nyikang was the first Reth, the Kwareth had not then come into being. These eleven chiefs form the board of electors, and with them sit three of the 614 Kwareth, one from each of the three royal houses, those of Papiti, Fadiet and Yor, whose sons are eligible for the kingship. Among these three families there may be as many as forty or fifty nyireth, entitled as such to consideration for the vacant throne. It is generally accepted, however, though not a hard and fast rule, that the three royal families should provide a king in rotation, and it is certainly understood that the family of the late king is automatically ruled out. Attention is therefore concentrated on the claims of the candidates from the other two houses, with the weight of opinion in favour of that one which has the more remotely provided a king. Many of the nyireth are eliminated at once on account of old age, extreme youth, physical debility, weakness of character, etc., and the merits and demerits of the rest are given serious consideration, until the number is reduced to half a dozen or less from among whom the final choice is made. How selection is finally made is the secret of the council. Sometimes the late king may have 'adopted' a certain nyireth, and thus indicated his wish in the matter of his successor. Such an indication does not mean that the king's protégé will certainly be chosen but it will have great

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Comboni thereupon began two Congregations, the Verona Fathers and the Missionary Sisters of Verona. In May 1871 he was made Pro-Vicar of Central Africa, and on January 26th, 1873, left Cairo for Khartoum to take up residence there. He had been preceded by some of his missionaries, and immediately opened stations at Dilling, El Obeid and Berber. In 1877 he was consecrated Bishop and made Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa, but returning to Khartoum from Rome he found the Sudan desolated by a terrible famine which caused the death of hundreds of thousands of natives and many priests. He was thus forced to abandon his cherished project of the expansion of the mission. Dr. Matteuci, the famous explorer, wrote concerning this:

> Mgr. Comboni sees in the sad loss of nearly all his missionaries the delaying, for who knows how long, of the realization of his vast projects. In the last few months he had begun an agricultural station on the Blue Nile at Gadaref destined to have a great future; he had made arrangements for the establishment of a station at Fashoda, the capital of the Shilluk country, one of the most barbarous and unhealthy places in Central Africa, and was then preparing an expedition to the Equatorial Lakes which would have gone down in history as one of the most important achievements of Daniel Comboni.

Comboni always had in mind the poor Shilluk whom he had encountered on his journey to Holy Cross, and it was to help them that he planned to open a mission at Fashoda, but the famine postponed indefinitely this design, and the trials of the mission reached a climax with the death of the great apostle himself in 1881. It seemed that shipwreck was near, but the mission weathered the storm, only to come to grief a few months later. In 1881 the Mahdist revolt broke out, and as Dilling, El Obeid and Berber fell to the Mahdi, the priests, brothers and nuns became their prisoners. Many of them died as the result of the treatment they received when they refused to deny their faith and become Moslems;